



Forest Plan Revision

Chippewa National Forest



Superior National Forest

Newsletter July 2003

You can still participate in National Forest Management

In May of 2003, the Chippewa and Superior National Forests issued a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and an individual Proposed Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) for each Forest. The Proposed Forest Plans propose management direction for the next 10 to 15 years. The Forest Service is encouraging public review and comment on the Draft EIS and Proposed Forest Plans. The public comment period for the Draft EIS and Proposed Forest Plans will end on August 11, 2003.

Documents available to the public include a separate Proposed Forest Plans for the Chippewa and for the Superior National Forests, the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which discusses the analysis for both national forests, an Executive Summary for the Draft EIS, large-scale color maps of the alternatives, and a Reviewer's Guide. The documents are available in paper copy and on computer CD. Paper copies of the documents are available for viewing at several area university and community libraries. These documents are also accessible on the Internet along with, maps and background information at:

www.fs.fed.us/r9/chippewa

The Draft EIS documents analysis of potential environmental impacts associated with seven alternative management approaches. The focus is

on specific resource issues and alternatives identified through public involvement earlier in the process. The analysis includes biological, social, and economic issues related to the communities within and around the Forests and the natural resources on the Forests.

The Proposed Forest Plans are based on Alternative E, which is currently preferred by the Forest Service. Alternative E would emphasize a mix of young and old forest settings, increase the amount of uneven-aged management from what is currently used, and emphasize a mix of developed and undeveloped recreation with motorized and non-motorized opportunities.

The purpose of these draft documents is to provide a basis for substantive review and comment by interested parties before a decision is made. The Forest Service will consider all written or emailed comments, but will only be able, in the final analysis, to address meaningful comments that contain specific concerns or suggestions. Substantive comments will help tailor the final analysis leading to a decision expected to be released in early 2004.

Reminder on commenting...

While all comments on the DEIS and Proposed Plans will be considered we can only provide detailed responses to substantive comments.

A substantive comment provides factual information, professional opinion, or informed judgment that is germane to the action being proposed.

Substantive comments are *specific, comparative, or solution-oriented*.

Comments are considered on basis of content not quantity.

The Forest Service can not respond in the Final EIS to these kinds of comments:

“The Proposed Plan looks good.” (*Example of non-specific comment*)

“I think the Regional Forester should select Alternative X to implement.” (*Example of opinion statement without supporting reasons*)

This is the kind of comment we can respond to:

“The amount of white pine established in the first decade is too low for the Superior National Forest, based on the historic range of natural variability.” (*Example of substantive comment.*)

To-date, the Forest Service has received approximately 300 comments regarding the draft Plan revision documents. Personally-generated comments appear to be arriving as frequently as form-style letters.

Send comments to:

Forest Plan Revision
Chippewa National Forest
200 Ash Avenue, NW
Cass Lake, MN 56633-8929

Email: tstruecker@fs.fed.us

June Public Meetings

Approximately 200 people attended the six public meetings that were held at various locations in the state during June 2003.

Many attendees were not familiar with Forest Plan revision and took advantage of the opportunity to become involved after a brief orientation. Other attendees came with specific questions and were well satisfied with time to discuss finer points with planning team specialists. Few comments were submitted during the meetings. Most people chose

to use the information exchange to continue to construct their comments.

The new MAPSERVER computer application was an interest point for several attendees. This application will continue to be accessible through the Forest Plan Revision web page.

Why does the Forest Service solicit comments?

While it is true that federal regulations require opportunities for public review and comment on Forest Service projects, there are many side benefits, including:

- ***Better decisions result from new ideas or information provided in comments.***
- ***Public input can lead to ownership and understanding of a project before a decision occurs and lays the ground work for implementation after a decision.***
- ***Often, comments provide insights into public concerns that extend beyond a particular project.***

What is “Content Analysis”?

Content analysis is a systematic method of compiling, categorizing, and capturing the full range of viewpoints and concerns expressed in public comments. Written letters, emails, and faxes received during the formal public comment period will be considered in the content analysis for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Proposed Forest Plans for the Chippewa and Superior National Forests. Content analysis is utilized to help the USDA Forest Service clarify, adjust, or focus technical information to prepare the Final EIS. A Final EIS is a completed analysis which will be the basis for a decision regarding the final revised Forest Plans.

In the content analysis process, the planning team will assign a unique identifier number to each comment received. This unique identifier allows analysts to track specific comments back to original letters. Often, one letter will contain several comments on various topics.

Each comment is reviewed and sorted into concerns and themes then entered into a computer database. The database allows the analysts to track and identify the range of and relationships between individual public concerns.

What you will see:

A final summary report for the content analysis will include a narrative describing public comment by topic, a list of public concerns, and supporting, sample excerpts from original letters.

It is important to understand that this process, in no way, treats comments as votes that attempt to sway

decision-makers towards the will of an identifiable majority. In fact, if several hundred exact replica's of a form letter are received expressing a particular viewpoint, they will register in the database as one comment linked to several hundred address records.

Content analysis provides a means for evaluating large numbers of comments in an equitable and accountable way and addresses the full range of concerns expressed. The content analysis process and final summary report are not intended to replace original comments. Rather, they provide an index to the original comments and a tool for the planning team and decision-maker.

What's next?

Content Analysis

Immediately following the close of the public comment period, the planning team will begin content analysis of comments received. This is expected to involve approximately two months of time.

Assembling the Forest Service Response

There are four basic ways that the planning team will respond to comments on the Draft EIS and Proposed Forest Plans during the remainder of 2003. These responses will be documented in the Final EIS.

1. Modify Proposed Forest Plan or other alternatives
2. Construct additional alternatives, if needed
3. Revise analytical methods and apply to final alternatives
4. Correct facts and revise conclusions

Final EIS, Record of Decision, final revised Forest Plans

Completion of the final documents and implementation of the new Forest Plans is anticipated early in 2004.

Forest Plan Revision web site:
www.fs.fed.us/r9/chippewa

Correction to Paper Copies

The Forest Service has discovered a difference between the paper copy and the CD/internet version of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Forest Plan Revision on the Chippewa and Superior National Forests. The difference occurred during printing of the paper copies and includes the text describing indicators 2, 3 and 4 in the Social Sustainability discussion, Section 3.9.2, (pages 3.9-35 to 3.9-61). This does not affect the Executive Summary of the Draft EIS.

Paper copies of the CD/internet version of this section have been sent to people who requested the paper version of the Draft EIS.

This information will be further updated in the Final EIS based on the comments we receive.

For more information or to request documents:

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The Route to a Revised Forest Plan

